

Exhibit No. 7Date 3-19-07Bill No. HB 713

Re: HB 713 Post Adoptive Counseling  
Testimony of Rosemary Miller, Executive Director  
Catholic Social Services of Montana  
March 19, 2007

Senate Committee Public Health, Welfare, and Safety

Can you imagine what it would be like to lose a child? As parents our greatest fear is that we will lose our child. Yet birth parents experience this tremendous loss in their life. Some birth parents show great courage and choose to make the decision to provide a better life for their child through adoption. Other birth parents have their parental rights terminated because they could not provide a safe life for their child due to their circumstances or lack of skills. Each of these birth parents thinks about their child nearly everyday and grieve the loss of their child.

This bill helps to create a post adoptive counseling and support program for birth parents. These services would include helping birth parents to obtain further education, mentor services, transportation, life skills development, budgeting, financial management, or housing and continue to understand the role they play in their children's lives. They need to have somewhere to turn to where they can begin to improve their lives and move forward. Many have lost their medicaid and TANF because they no longer have a child. The great majority have been living in poverty. We need to help them break the cycle of poverty. They have great needs and don't know where to turn to begin to put their life back together after their child is no longer with them. They need to obtain marketable skills and learn how to organize their lives. This bill provides the ability to establish an aftercare program for those individuals whose children have been adopted. This is a special population of individuals with special needs.

Strengthening the birth family helps to strengthen the adoption triad. Adoptive families, adoptees and birth families all need to be respected and shown honor. Adoptees need to know that their birth parents made a selfless, courageous decision made on their behalf.

We ask for a do pass on HB 713 to help those individuals who experienced the loss of their children and want help to move on in their life successfully.